

SENATE BILL 1924

By Finney

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49,
relative to community schools.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, is amended by adding
Sections 2 through 8 as a new Part 24:

SECTION 2. This part shall be known and may be cited as “The Tennessee Community
Schools Act”.

SECTION 3. The General Assembly finds and declares that:

- (1) All children are capable of success;
- (2) Schools are the centers of vibrant communities;
- (3) Strong families build strong educational communities;
- (4) Children succeed when adults work together to foster positive educational
outcomes;
- (5) Schools work best when families take active roles in the education of
children;
- (6) Schools today are limited in their ability to dedicate time and resources to
provide a wide range of educational opportunities to students because of the focus on
standardized test outcomes;
- (7) By providing learning opportunities outside of normal school hours, including
programs on life skills and health, students are more successful academically, more
engaged in their communities, safer, and better prepared to make a successful transition
from school to adulthood;

(8) A community school is a traditional school that actively partners with its community to leverage existing resources and identify new resources to support the transformation of the school to provide enrichment and additional life skill opportunities for students, parents, and community members at-large. Each community school is unique because its programming is designed by and for the school staff, in partnership with parents, community stakeholders, and students;

(9) Successful community schools currently exist in this state. Such schools should be models for replication;

(10) Research shows that community schools have a powerful positive impact on students, as demonstrated by increased academic success, a positive change in attitudes toward school and learning, and decreased behavioral problems;

(11) After-school and evening programs offered by community schools provide academic enrichment consistent with state standards and general school curriculum; an opportunity for physical fitness activities for students, fine arts programs, structured learning "play" time, and other recreational opportunities; a safe haven for children and teens; and work supports for working families; and

(12) Community schools are cost-effective because they leverage existing resources provided by local, state, federal, and private sources and bring programs to the schools, where the students are already congregated.

SECTION 4. As used in this part:

(1) "Community consortium" means a partnership established between an LEA and one (1) or more community partners for purposes of establishing, operating, and sustaining a community school;

(2) "Community partner" means a provider of one (1) or more community services or a community organization or for profit or nonprofit entity with a desire to improve conditions in the community;

(3) "Community school" means a public and private partnership to coordinate educational, developmental, family, health, and before-school and after-school-care programs during school and non-school hours for students, families, and local communities at a public school with the objectives of improving academic achievement, reducing absenteeism, building stronger relationships between schools, students, parents, and communities, and improving the skills, capacity, and well-being of the surrounding community residents; and

(4) "Community services" include:

(A) Primary medical and dental care that is available to students and community residents;

(B) Mental health prevention and treatment services that is available to students and community residents;

(C) Academic-enrichment activities designed to promote a student's cognitive development and provide opportunities to practice and apply academic skills;

(D) Programs designed to increase school attendance, including reducing early chronic absenteeism rates;

(E) Youth development programs designed to promote young people's social, emotional, physical, and moral development, including arts, sports, physical fitness, youth leadership, community service, and service-learning opportunities;

(F) Early childhood education, including the voluntary pre-K, Head Start and Early Head Start programs;

(G) Programs designed to:

(i) Facilitate parental involvement in, and engagement with, their children's education, including parental activities that involve supporting, monitoring, and advocating for their children's education;

(ii) Promote parental leadership in the life of the school; and

(iii) Build parenting skills;

(H) School-age child-care services, including before-school and after-school services and full-day programming that operates during school holidays, summers, vacations, and weekends;

(I) Programs that provide assistance to students who have been truant, suspended, or expelled and that offer multiple pathways to high school graduation, a GED® or other alternatives to high school completion;

(J) Youth and adult job-training services and career-counseling services;

(K) Nutrition-education services;

(L) Adult education, including instruction in English as a second language, adult literacy, computer literacy, financial literacy, and hard-skills training; and

(M) Programs that provide remedial education and enrichment activities.

SECTION 5.

(a) LEAs and schools are authorized and encouraged to form community consortiums with a variety of community partners to establish a community school or schools with an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement that will lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.

(b) The community schools, formed pursuant to subsection (a), shall strive to become centers of their communities providing programs and services for persons of all

ages. They shall be open to everyone throughout each day, including in the evenings, on weekends and in the summer.

SECTION 6.

(a) The state board of education and the department shall support and encourage LEAs in the creation of community schools. All policies, guidelines, and rules and regulations adopted by the state board pursuant to this part shall actively foster the formation, development and operation of community schools. Such policies, guidelines, or rules and regulations shall permit teachers to receive in-service credit for teaching classes for parents, such as parenting classes, at the community school outside of normal school hours.

(b)

(1) The department may seek funds from private donors and through grants to fund LEAs' efforts to create community schools and to support the schools.

(2) The department shall assist LEAs and schools in writing grants for funding of community schools by providing technical assistance directly or through a resource and referral directory established and maintained by the department. When possible, either through state appropriations or other funding, the department shall provide funds to LEAs for the employment of grant writers.

(c) Subject to appropriation in the general appropriations act or the availability of funding from private sources for creation and support of community schools, the department shall make community school grants available to fund community schools and to enhance programs at community schools. A request-for-proposal process shall be used in awarding grants under this subsection (c). Proposals may be submitted on behalf of a school, an LEA, or a consortium of two (2) or more schools or LEAS.

Proposals shall be evaluated and scored on the basis of criteria consistent with this part and other factors developed and adopted by the state board.

(d) In order to qualify for a community school grant under this section, a school shall have, at a minimum, the following components:

(1) Before and after-school programming each school day to meet the identified needs of students;

(2) Weekend programming;

(3) At least four (4) weeks of summer programming;

(4) A local advisory group comprised of school leadership, parents, and community stakeholders that establishes school-specific programming goals, assesses program needs, and oversees the process of implementing expanded programming;

(5) A program director or resource coordinator who is responsible for establishing the local advisory group, assessing the needs of students and community members, identifying programs to meet those needs, developing the before and after-school, weekend and summer programming and overseeing the implementation of programming to ensure high quality, robust participation;

(6) Programming that includes academic excellence aligned with the curriculum, life skills, healthy minds and bodies, parental support and community engagement and that promotes staying in school, non-violent behavior and non-violent conflict resolution;

(7) Maintenance of attendance records in all programming components;

(8) Maintenance of measurable data showing annual participation and the impact of programming on the participating children and adults;

(9) Documentation of true collaboration between the school and community stakeholders, including local governmental units, civic organizations, families, businesses, and social service providers; and

(10) A non-discrimination policy ensuring that the community school does not condition participation upon race, ethnic origin, religion, sex, or disability.

(e) Each grant recipient under subsection (c) shall:

(1) Conduct periodic evaluations of the progress achieved with funds allocated under a grant, consistent with the purposes of this part;

(2) Use the evaluations to refine and improve activities conducted with the grant and the performance measures for the activities;

(3) Make the results of the evaluations publicly available, including providing public notice of the availability; and

(4) Identify best practices and lessons learned for the purpose of helping other LEAs and schools in the formation of community schools and to revise the community school policies of the state board and the department.

SECTION 7. The office of research and education accountability (OREA) in the office of the comptroller of the treasury shall study and report on the formation and operation of community schools. OREA shall specifically identify best practices that can be replicated by other LEAs and schools desiring to form community schools. OREA shall examine whether community schools have improved student learning, family engagement with the schools and the communities, school effectiveness in decreasing the dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate, and physical and mental health of the students and other members of the community. OREA shall examine whether community schools have met their educational and community goals. OREA shall file its report containing its findings and conclusions and any

recommendations concerning community schools with the education committees of the house of representatives and the senate by November 1, 2018.

SECTION 8. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.